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C U B A

Text of a Statement by the Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan, M.P., in the House of Commons, on October 25, 1962.

With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on recent events in relation to Cuba.

On Monday, the 22nd of October, President Kennedy in a personal message, and through the United States Ambassador in London, made clear to me his deep concern about the Soviet development of Cuba as a formidable base for offensive ballistic missiles. It is, of course, true that the United States authorities had known for some time of the location of a number of surface-to-air missile sites in Cuba: but these missiles, even though carrying nuclear warheads, may be regarded as of a defensive nature.

Very recently, however, a number of medium range ballistic, or ground-to-ground, missile sites have been definitely identified in Cuba. Reports from all American intelligence sources confirm that at least 30 missiles are already present in Cuba. Such missiles with their range of over a thousand miles, could reach a large area of the United States, including Washington, and nearly the whole of Central America and the Caribbean including the Panama Canal. In addition, sites for intermediate range ballistic missiles with an operational range of 2,200 nautical miles have been identified. Further sites for

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both types of missiles are being constructed. All these missiles are designed to carry, and must be presumed to carry, nuclear bombs. In addition, Russia has supplied Cuba with I.L. 28 aircraft, of which over twenty have been definitely identified. These bombers are, of course, offensive and not defensive weapons. Neither the Soviet Union nor the Cuban Government appear to have denied these facts. In addition, it is believed that there are at least 5,000 Soviet military technicians already on the island. These facts, which are fully established on the basis of the evidence provided, serious though they are in themselves, took on a more sinister character because of the previous history of this affair. The House may recall that, on the 4th and the 14th September, President Kennedy issued solemn warnings about the build-up of the offensive weapons in Cuba and that, on the 11th of September, the official Soviet news agency, Tass, said, and I quote: "The armaments and military equipment sent to Cuba are designed exclusively for defensive purposes" and that "there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons ... for a retaliatory blow to any other country, for instance, Cuba." That amounted to an official disclaimer by the Soviet Government. In addition, as recently as the 18th of October Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, explicitly speaking on the instructions of his Government, assured President Kennedy in person that Soviet assistance to Cuba was of a purely defensive character. At that very moment, circumstantial evidence to the contrary was accumulating.

In view of the President's pledge that the United States would take measures to oppose the creation of offensive military power in Cuba, the Russian action, contrary to their categorical assurances, in developing this power can only be regarded as a deliberate adventure designed to test the ability and determination of the United States. The President no doubt formed the view, and in my judgment rightly, that to have accepted this would throw doubt on America's pledges in all parts of the world and expose the entire free world to a new series of perils.

The House is well aware of the action so far taken by the President of the United States in this situation, both in the area of Cuba itself and in the Security Council of the United Nations. As regards the area of Cuba, the measures announced in the President's Proclamation are designed to meet a situation that is without precedent. Moreover it cannot be said that these measures are extreme. Indeed they are studiously moderate in that the President has only declared certain limited types of war material, not even all armaments to be prohibited. The armaments specified are these: surface-to-surface missiles, bomber aircraft, bombs, air-to-surface rockets, and guided missiles, together with their warheads and equipment. None of the categories specified in the President's Proclamation could honestly be described as defensive.

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In the Security Council, the United States Representative has made a strong appeal for a Resolution which calls for the dismantling and withdrawal from Cuba of all nuclear missiles and offensive weapons and for international supervision of this process by a United Nations Observer Corps. The Resolution also urgently recommends that the United States and the Soviet Union should confer promptly on measures to remove the existing threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere and the peace of the world, and to report thereon to the Security Council.

As the House knows, Sir Patrick Dean, speaking on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, gave his support to this Resolution. I understand that the discussion in the Security Council has been adjourned until 4 p.m. New York Time, that is, 9 p.m. London Time.

Meanwhile, as the House will have heard, the Acting Secretary General, U Thant, has addressed a message in identical terms to President Kennedy and Chairman Khruschchev. He has also sent, I am informed, a message to the Cuban Government. U Thant's proposal is that there should be a voluntary suspension on behalf of the Russians of all arms shipments to Cuba, and at the same time a suspension of the quarantine measures involving the search of ships. His appeal to the Cuban Government adds the suggestion that the construction and development of the military facilities and installations should be suspended, all these measures to last for a period of two to three weeks in order to give time for the parties concerned to meet and discuss with a view to finding a peaceful solution of the problem.

I am not yet in a position to inform the House of any replies from any of the three Governments to whom the Acting Secretary General has addressed his messages. The British Government is, of course, concerned that this new threat to security should be dealt with as rapidly as possible and will add their support to any measures which genuinely lead to that end. They trust also that based upon some alleviation of the present state of tension it might be possible to move into a wider field of negotiation. Nevertheless, I think what has happened in the last few weeks must confirm our view that in these grave matters we cannot rest upon mere words and promises. These need, if they are to restore confidence, to be independently verified and confirmed.

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